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STATE FOR EAP/MLS (AARON COPE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2018

TAGS: PREL ETRD PHUM BM LG

SUBJECT: LATVIA SUPPORTIVE OF BANS ON BURMESE GEMS AND HARDWOODS

REF: STATE 05276

Classified By: Ambassador Catherine Todd Bailey for Reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) PolEconOff delivered reftel points January 22 to Signe Jansone, the A/S level official that covers Asia at the MFA, and Dana Rudaka, Head of Asia and Oceania. Regarding the status of the implementation of the European Council's October 2007 decision to restrict investment and trade with Burma in the mining and logging sectors, Jansone stated that the pertinent institutions within the GOL have been informed of this policy. However, it should be noted that Latvia has no known trade contacts with Burma.

¶2. (C) Jansone noted that several Ambassadors from ASEAN nations accredited to Latvia have told her in phone conversations that the Burmese regime has reached out to these nations and asked for guidance on what the regime might do to facilitate democracy in Burma. Jansone noted that such actions on the part of the Burmese authorities may simply be a stalling tactic used by the regime to create the impression within ASEAN nations that it is making some efforts toward reform.

¶3. (C) Comment: In general, the GOL supports U.S. efforts to ratchet up pressure on the regime--including bans on burmese gems and hardwoods. However, to date, the GOL has not shown a willingness to take a strong leadership role on the issue within the EU.

BAILEY